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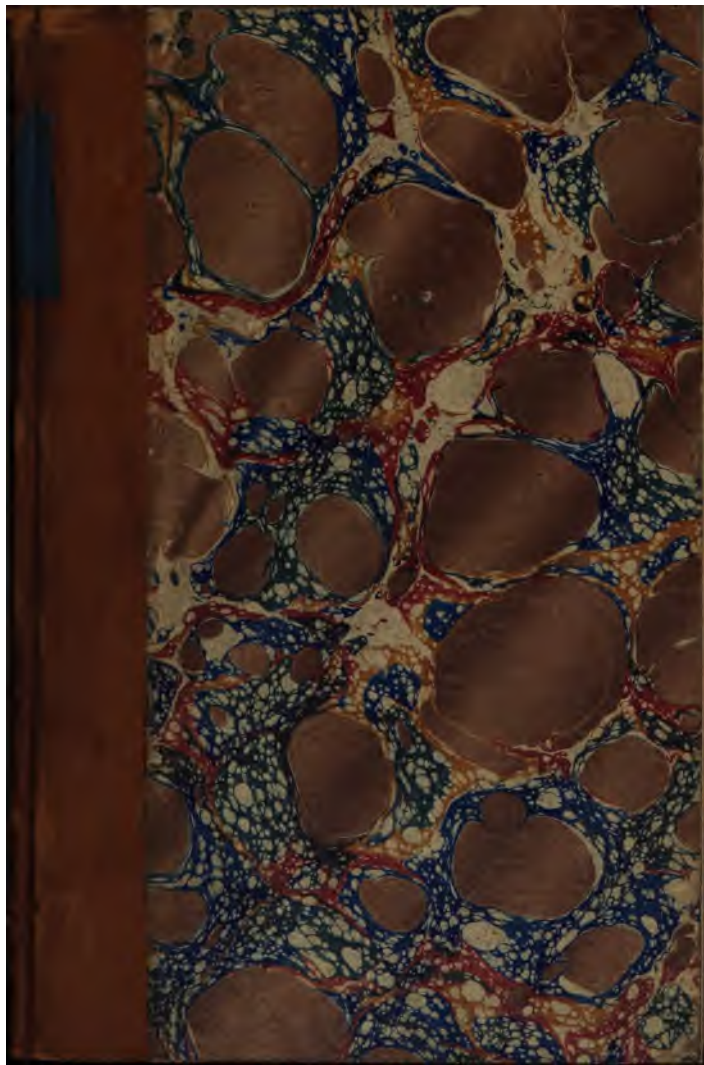
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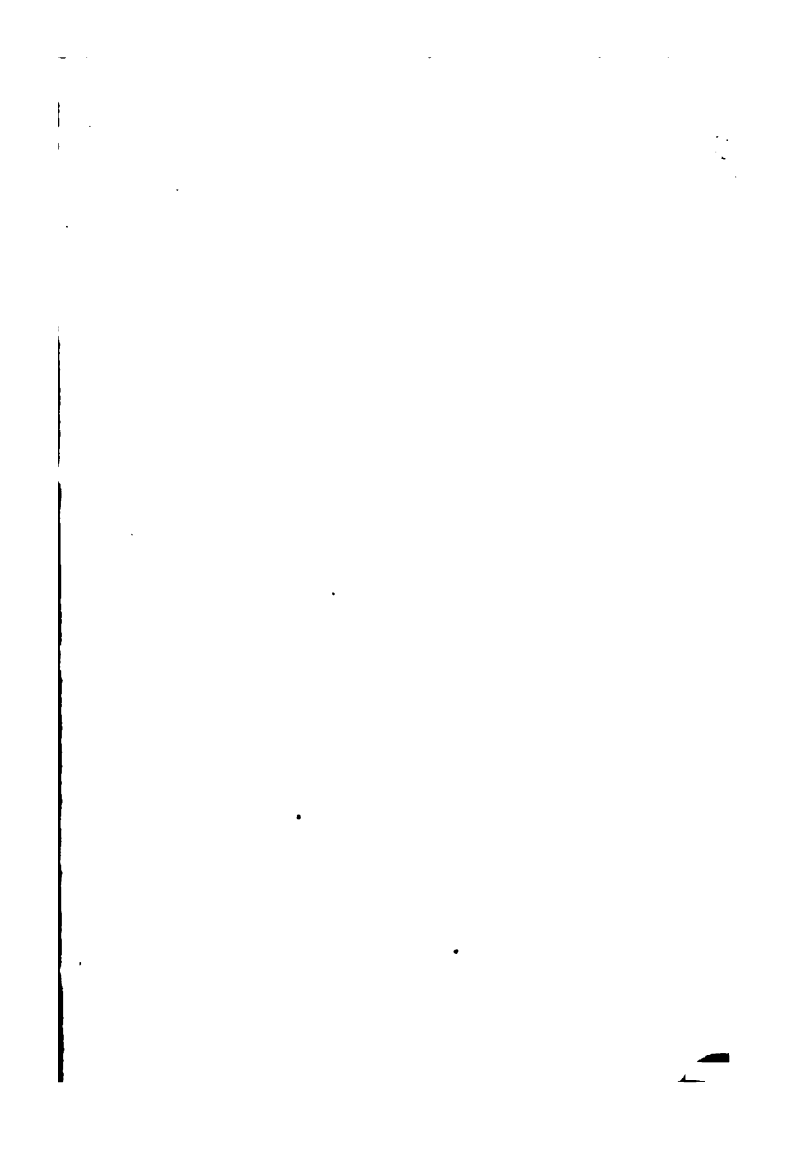
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“IT IS I;”

OR,

THE VOICE OF JESUS IN THE STORM.


BY

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LONDON:

JOHN SNOW, 35, PATERNOSTER ROW.

1849.



“IT IS I.”

READER! Is it stormy weather with thee? Do cares, disappointments, bereavements, as a heavy cloud, deluge thee with sorrow? Do spiritual troubles assail thee as a hurricane, and drive hither and thither thy harassed soul? Do the winds and the waves beat upon thy frail bark, so that it seems about to sink? “O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted,” listen to the voice of Jesus, who comes to thee in the storm, walking upon the waters, and says “It is I; be not afraid!”

The design of religion is to make us of good cheer. This world is indeed a vale of tears, but the Man of sorrows has visited it that we may rejoice. We are surrounded by causes of alarm, but the Gospel bids us fear not. And that which alone can enable

us, to be of good cheer amid sorrows, and of good courage amid perils, is the presence of our God and Saviour. To believe in him as always near, always kind, always mighty to save, is the true and sole antidote to fear and grief. It is only in proportion as we recognise his voice, as that of a friend, saying "It is I," that we can comply with his exhortation, "Be of good cheer; be not afraid."

The disciples were once in a storm on the Sea of Galilee.* Their Master had been miraculously feeding five thousand persons, on five loaves and two fishes. The people were so astonished at his power, that they resolved to make him their King. But as he had come not to reign, but to suffer, he urged them to return quietly to their homes, while he himself retired to a mountain to pray. Meanwhile Jesus "constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side" of the lake. It is most likely that they did not understand the reason of this request. It seemed to them strange. Why should he be left to disperse the mul-

* Matthew viii. 23-26; Mark vi. 45-50; John vi. 15-21.

titude alone? Why should they be deprived of his company? If he wished retirement, why could they not wait on the shore till he came from the mountain? How could he follow them, if they went away with the ship? But they were *commanded*, and this was sufficient. Even so, it is still oftentimes the duty of Christians to do many things the *reason* of which is hidden from them. But an obedient disciple will not say, "*Why* has this been appointed me to do? *why* has that been given me to suffer? for until I comprehend the reason I will not obey the command." O no! his language will rather be, "Lord, *what* wilt thou have me to do?" If the head of a family, the commander of a ship, the general of an army, often give orders which, though not explained, are promptly obeyed, shall we presume to sit questioning the will of Jesus, instead of "making haste and delaying not to keep his commandments?" May we not expect to hear him reprovably say to us, "What is that to thee? follow thou me!"

But the Christian's duty not only sometimes

baffles his reason, but opposes his preferences. How much more willingly would the disciples have remained in the company of their beloved Master! How much they perhaps fancied they were losing, while, deprived of his company, they were in the ship alone! So, in obedience to duty, the Christian may still seem to be a loser, not only in temporal, but even in spiritual respects. His opportunities of religious advancement may appear to be curtailed by a course which, otherwise, he would not hesitate to pronounce his duty to his Saviour. It is his duty still. Apparent consequences do not diminish the obligation of an obvious command. And he who most scrupulously adheres to the path of obedience will most successfully travel in the path of improvement too. Duty is identical with privilege. However delightful and profitable the company of Jesus must have been, the disciples gained far more by being obediently absent than rebelliously near. Obedience is the best kind of nearness.

The evening on which the disciples embarked was calm and fair. The day had not

been stormy,—else the five thousand could not so comfortably have sat upon the grass at that miraculous feast. It was after the disciples had left the shore that “the sea arose by reason of a great wind that blew.” They therefore must have anticipated a safe and pleasant voyage. Thus how often do storms visit believers, when only calm weather is expected! The brightest beginnings are not sure harbingers of continued prosperity. The morning sun may be undimmed, but black thunder-clouds may conceal his rays at noon. The finest day may be followed by the stormiest night; and the ocean, now without a ripple, may ere long writhe beneath the lashings of the tempest. Our dearest treasures may suddenly be taken from us, and our fairest hopes withered in the bud. Sunshine and calm are treacherous,—they cannot always last. Do not sailors expect to encounter gales and tempests, and therefore provide themselves with anchors and all other things that may be of use in such emergencies? How foolish are they who voyage on the perilous ocean of life without the Christian’s hope

“as an anchor of the soul, sure and stedfast!” We should be prepared for storms, that we may not be overwhelmed with surprise and terror when they come. But if Jesus is with us, the most terrific tempest cannot harm us. The profoundest calm is infinitely perilous without him.

Behold the frightened disciples in their storm-driven boat! They have to struggle with difficulties. The favourable breeze with which they weighed anchor has changed to an opposing gale. They have taken down their sail as no longer of any use, and they are now tugging at the oars! “They toiled in rowing, for the wind was contrary unto them.” Moreover, the night “was now dark!” They were in danger too, for their little vessel was “in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves.” Worse than all, they were alone; for “Jesus had not come unto them.” Fit representation of the circumstances by which believers are still often tried. What contrary winds and tides have they to contend with! what darkness surrounds them! what perils threaten them! and sometimes even Jesus seems with-

drawn. The stormy gales of trouble blow from various quarters. Bitter disappointments, grievous losses, perplexing cares, anxious apprehensions, pinching poverty, the injuries of foes, and, far worse, the slights of friends, painful diseases suspending beloved activities, prostrated strength, debilitated faculties, weary wakefulness, gnawing pain, or heart-breaking bereavements, tearing from us those with whom our very life was bound together, leaving a blank nothing earthly can fill, or a wounded spirit bending beneath the burden of undeveloped anguish, or severe conflicts with the great adversary of souls, harassing temptations, distorted views of truth, awful terrors of mind, gloomy doubts, dark despondency,—O what black clouds do such stormy winds as these often cause to gather round the believer, so that scarcely a ray of light can struggle through to cheer him as he is tossed up and down amid the billows!

Was this to be expected? Am I not a disciple, under the special protection of Jesus? Has he not promised to defend me from all harm? Has he not told me that his angels

have charge over me, and that no evil thing shall happen unto me? If he were my Protector, my Saviour, my Friend, could such troubles as these assail me? They assailed the disciples. Though Jesus was then bodily on the earth, yet they did not escape the storm. But Jesus was not unfaithful or forgetful. Be not thou then, O reader, surprised if sometimes thou also art "in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves." Who expects the ocean to be always calm? Discipleship is distinguished rather by exposure to troubles than exemption from them. "We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom." Christ has promised to deliver us out of the storm, but not to secure us from encountering it. "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to men; but God is faithful, who" (not *will preserve you from trial*, but) "will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation also make a way of escape that ye may be able" (not to avoid it, but) "*to bear it.*" "The same afflictions have been accomplished in the brotherhood" of

faith in all ages. The saints in glory all toiled in rowing amid similar billows. Though never shipwrecked, they were all tempest tost. The elder brother himself did not escape! He was made like to his brethren,—in all points tempted as we are! “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some *strange* thing happened unto you.” *

These storms may often rise against us, even when acting in direct obedience to the will of Christ. The disciples had not set sail without his express command. Yet the tempest assailed them. He knew that the wind would arise. He himself commissioned it to blow. Nevertheless, he told the disciples to go over to the other side! We should learn never to interpret duty by success. The opposition which assails us in the course of obedience is no evidence that we are mistaken. He who gives laws to his servants is the controller of all events. It may be his will that in the very act of obedience we should encounter storms. He foreknew every trial we
 * 1 Cor. x. 13; 1 Peter iv. 12; v. 9.

should meet with when he laid down the route we should pursue. We must not dare to turn back. The disciples, when the wind became contrary, might have wished to return to shore, especially as Jesus was there. But they had been commanded to go to the other side; and so they continued rowing, even though they made little or no progress. They were not responsible for the contrary wind which stopped them, but they were responsible for striving to obey the will of their Master. Even so, no difficulty must daunt us in the way of obedience. Let the prow of our vessel be ever turned towards the point of duty, however terrible the gale, however mighty the waves which beat against it. Though they may seem to force us back, yet, if we persevere in obediently struggling against them, we are really making rapid progress. Christ secures deliverance and success to every faithful disciple. Better, infinitely better, to suffer the loss of all things in obeying Jesus than to purchase the universe by retreating from the storm. Better perish in the tempest than seek safety in a disobedient

flight. "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever will lose his life, for my sake, shall find it."

But while the disciples are battling with the winds and the waves, where is Jesus? In the mountain alone with his Father, spending the night in prayer. Are his afflicted followers forgotten? When were they ever absent from his considerate thoughts, his loving heart? Doubtless he is interceding for them. He intercedes for thee, afflicted, tempest-tost reader! Most consoling truth. "He ever liveth to make intercession for us!" By night and by day, in the tempest and the calm, his all-prevalent prayer arises, "Father, keep them from the evil!" Thou art never forgotten by him. The hands of Moses grew weary as he was praying for the Israelites, and when they drooped Amalek prevailed. But a mightier than Moses is here, who never is weary, and whom the Father heareth always. He bears thy name upon his heart,—thou art graven on the palms of his hands,—in every storm he is on the mount, and his intercession renders thy deliverance certain. Think not

that, because the wind is boisterous, and the storm continues long, he intercedes in vain. Thy not sinking proves that his advocacy prevails. Expect a calm, and thou mayst be disappointed. But charge not his mediation with inefficacy. Expect supporting grace, and final deliverance, and thy hope shall never make thee ashamed. He prays not that our day may never be stormy; but, in answer to his intercession, we may always be confident that "as our day so shall our strength be." "Jesus not only prayed for his disciples, but watched them in the tempest. They could not see him. They might think themselves beyond his sight; for they had rowed twenty-five or thirty furlongs, or stadia,—a distance of upwards of three miles. And as we are told the night was dark, their small vessel could not be seen from the shore. Yet the eye of Jesus was on it. He saw every wave which broke over it. He beheld the poor disciples in dismay; labouring unavailingly at the oars. He understood all that was in their hearts. "He saw them toiling in rowing!" And does he not see thee also, storm-driven

reader? Think not thy case is unknown to him. Every secret anxiety, every heart-buried grief, is watched from his throne on high! He knows all thy difficulties, sorrows, and temptations. Thou shalt not perish by any oversight of his. When he sees that the fitting season has arrived, he will appear for thy deliverance!

This manifest interposition may be delayed. It was not till the fourth watch in the night that the disciples beheld their Saviour. How long those hours appeared! Till three o'clock in the morning they toiled in rowing against the furious winds and waves. Perhaps they unbelievably thought they were quite forgotten by their Master, and abandoned to the raging storm. And still it often happens to afflicted believers, that Jesus seems to delay his promised help. It is delay in appearance only. Was he not assisting his disciples most effectually while watching them from the shore, and interceding on their behalf? Were they not preserved from destruction, though as yet they had not seen their deliverer? Were they not saved in the storm, though not from it?

Thus Jesus is ever present to protect us, even though we may not see him. Troubles may appear overwhelmingly great, and spiritual darkness benight our souls, without one ray of comfort to dart across the gloom. And this may continue days, months, years! Jesus may delay to *reveal* himself, but not to succour and support his disciples. And for that very delay he has the kindest, wisest reasons. O to say from the heart "My times are in thy hand!" to believe them to be in the *best* hand! to wish them in no other! and therefore not to murmur or be dismayed, even though till the fourth watch in the night we are allowed to continue toiling in rowing, the wind being contrary. His time is the best time. The hour of deliverance will certainly arrive. "For the vision is yet for an appointed time; but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry."

"When at length Jesus did appear to his storm-tossed disciples, the manner of his coming was so unexpected and strange that, instead of joy, their first emotion was terror.

He approached them, walking on the waves! Who would have expected him thus? It was a prodigy never witnessed before. Notwithstanding former displays of his power, the disciples doubtlessly regarded the intervening sea an impassable barrier between them and their divine Master. This was the last direction to which they would turn in expectation of beholding him. And when he did come—making the very waters, which they thought must keep him absent, the path by which he approached—their terror was such that they did not recognise their deliverer, but fancied that they saw a spirit.

Ah! how often do we limit the Holy One of Israel! We too much think of him as like to ourselves in his resources! We regard as impossibilities expedients which present to him no difficulty. We fancy help cannot come from quarters whence, perhaps, he is at that moment advancing to our succour! We presume to prescribe to the Almighty. Instead of praying for his help, and leaving to his loving wisdom the manner of it, we too often determine in our own minds the method

by which the hoped-for assistance will be given. Disappointed in our expectation, we perhaps murmur that our prayers have been disregarded, though at the very time we are receiving in some other way the aid we sought. Is not strength to bear a burden as much an answer to prayer as its removal? Is not grace to persevere in supplication, amid surrounding gloom, as much a proof of our Saviour's faithfulness as if the sunshine dispensed the darkness? May not a still deeper sense of our vileness and helplessness be an answer to prayer for spiritual growth, still more valuable at some seasons than even the joy and peace we coveted? Though the enemy may not have left us, yet is it no mercy to be enabled to maintain the conflict, and, "having done all, to stand?" And though the storm may continue to rage, and the calm be long delayed, yet is it not a proof that Jesus is with us, so long as the waves are not suffered to overwhelm us?

Like the disciples, who "cried out for fear, saying, It is a spirit," we often mistake the form and presence of our Lord!! We

look with apprehension on what should disperse our fear. Our best blessings, and the answers to our most earnest prayers, cause us alarm and grief. What short-sighted, blind and ignorant creatures we are! How we mistake the intentions of our dearest Friend! How often we tremble, when we should be of good courage! How often mourn in our complaints, when we should abound in thanksgiving! O help us, gracious Saviour, to leave with thee the manner of thy appearing! However strange, however terrible the outward shape, may we recognise the presence of our ever-faithful Friend! Nothing is impossible with thee! Still thou dost often walk upon the waters. What we most dread as distressing and ruinous, thou mayest select as the best method of effecting our deliverance! Though the tempest be high, and though the night be dark, yet let us adoringly recognise and hail thee, walking to us on the boisterous waves!

The terror of the disciples was speedily allayed by the encouraging voice of Jesus, "It is I; be not afraid!—It is no spirit, no

avenging angel, none of the powers of darkness; it is I,—your Master, your Protector, your Friend: fear not!" What consolation this must have afforded to that affrighted crew! There is nothing which can so allay the grief of afflicted believers as hearing Jesus say "It is I." In every calamity, in every grief, Jesus is present. We are never alone. Our best Friend is always near. And he is not only with us in the storm, but he sends and controls it. Too apt are we to attribute our troubles to secondary causes alone, losing sight of him without whom not even a sparrow falleth to the ground. Men say "This was an accident," or "That was owing to the operation of general laws," or "An enemy hath done this." Jesus says "*It is I!*" Whatever may be the truth respecting human agency and natural laws, there is a supreme controller, without whose permission and direction no event transpires. Though man's free agency is not invaded, nor the ordinary course of nature impeded, most absolutely true is the Saviour's own declaration, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work."

In every event, important or trivial in the estimation of man, he speaks and says "It is I!" In poverty, "It is I!" In sickness, "It is I!" In anxiety, "It is I!" In bereavement, "It is I!" Whatever be the nature of the storm, from whatever quarter the hurricane may blow, still Jesus says "It is I!" Not merely when the waters are smooth, reflecting every shadow on their mirrored surface, while an unclouded sun diffuses light and gladness all around,—but when the dark clouds gather, and the night is black, and the tempest howls, and the thunder rattles, and the waters rage, and hideous gulphs yawn as if to swallow up the despairing disciple,—

When tempests shriek through all the cleaving sky,
And the mad billows writhe in their huge agony,"—

even then amid the gloom may Jesus be seen by the eye of faith, walking in majesty upon the waves, and, amid the elemental din, his "still small voice" of mingled dignity and love may be heard saying "It is I; be not afraid to . . . to recognise Christ more vividly in all our troubles; to lose sight of human agency

in the absorbing contemplation of Jesus! Regrets and murmurs will never end, if we look only or chiefly at secondary causes. "If I had not done this,—if I had been more prudent in that,—if such an one had not been so unfaithful and unkind"—O how endless may such false reasonings become! What discontent they will occasion! How difficult will it be to feel resigned, when we blame ourselves or others as the sole causes of our troubles! Let me look away from inferior agencies. Jesus sends the storm. Did he ordain this affliction, and shall I not be submissive to his authority? If he sent this poverty, ought I not to welcome it? If he ordered this disappointment, should I regret it? If he has commissioned this sickness, shall I not patiently endure it? If he has allowed enmity to assail me, shall not hatred to my enemy be forgotten in submission to my Friend? If he has bereaved me, and earth appears a blank in the absence of those so dear, though I cannot but mourn, shall I murmur? If he mixes the cup, shall I not drink it? May I not be sure that it is wisely and kindly mingled, and;

though it may be bitter, that diseased health must result from the draught? Not beholding God in the storm, and entertaining false conceptions of him, is a prolific source of fear. Some other form is seen in the tempest, which inspires alarm. Men are afraid of Fate, or chance, and behold phantoms of evil all around. An assassin lies in ambush at every turn. Each cloud that gathers conceals an enemy, and the muttering of the tempest is the voice of a foe. Thus superstition is full of fears, in proportion as it fails to recognise the one sole object of religious reverence. How great a truth is there in the saying of Solomon, "In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence, and his children shall have a place of refuge." Fear and courage are allied. If we rightly fear the true God, we need fear none besides. What can harm us, if he is our Protector? Whose enmity need we dread, if he is our Friend? Why should the storm distress or frighten us, if Jesus is there to shield us from injury, and even to make the fury of the winds and waves conducive to our good?

We cannot escape from the storms of life; but those storms lose their power, not only to injure, but to alarm, when we hear the voice of Jesus saying "It is I; be not afraid!"

As the only reason why the disciples should not fear, Jesus simply said, "It is I." As if this was quite sufficient to banish alarm. It was unnecessary to assure them of their safety, or what he would do to effect it. It was enough to let them know that it was he! His presence was a sufficient guarantee of deliverance. And does not this assurance, "It is I," involve everything needed to calm the fears, and soothe the sorrows of afflicted believers still?

It was the voice of POWER. He spake of whom it is recorded that "all things were made by him!" — who said "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth," — whom the elements of nature reverently obeyed, and who at that moment was manifesting his supremacy, by suspending his own laws, while he walked upon the sea. It was the voice of one who was obviously able to do everything that was necessary for the

safety of the disciples. The storm might be furious, but he could control it. The waves might be boisterous, but he who marched upon their foaming crests could curb their violence. He could, by a word, either still the tempest or preserve his disciples in the midst of it. And it is the same voice of Omnipotence which still speaks amidst the storm. He who made can control. It is as true in reference to troubles of every kind as it is of the elements of nature,—that “fire and hail, snow and vapours, stormy wind, fulfil his word. He hath established them for ever: he hath made a decree which shall not pass. The sea is his, and he made it. He set for it bars and doors, and said, Hitherto shalt thou come, and no farther; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed.” And surely he who “commandeth and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof,” is equally able to “make the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still.” Afflicted disciple, be of good cheer! He who speaks to thee in the tempest raised it, and can control it: The Friend who bids thee fear not is the God

by whom all things were made: He who appears for thy succour has but to speak, and it is done,—to command, and it standeth fast. His word is as mighty when it speaks for the comfort of his afflicted people as when it said, “Let there be light, and there was light.” Is anything too hard for the Lord?

His very word of grace is strong
As that which built the skies;
The voice that rolls the stars along
Speaks all the promises.”

But the recognition of this voice as one of power is not alone sufficient to take away our fears. It might increase it. For he who speaks is the God whom I have offended by my sins; and whose power enables him only the more effectually to secure my punishment. If he can control the storm, he may direct that lightning to scathe me, those waves to engulf me. The acknowledgment merely of the God of nature is not enough to calm the agitated breast. Until I can hope for pardon, the very perfections which render him glorious render him dreadful too! That infinite

majesty, that unlimited sovereignty, that boundless might, are all arrayed against my sins. I must behold Jehovah as the God of grace; I must see him in the person of his Son, before my fears can vanish. And it is *Jesus*, Immanuel, God with us, who says, "It is I."

It was the voice of LOVE. The disciples at once recognised it as such. It was their best Friend who addressed them, whose tenderness had been uniform, who always made allowances for their infirmities, bore with their provocations, and sympathized with their sorrows. They had never witnessed any act of his life which was not marked by love. None who sought his succour were ever rejected by him; and to no complaint did he ever turn a deaf or an indifferent ear. They were therefore perfectly sure his power would be put forth to help them. The same voice of Love speaks in the storm still. He addresses us,—of which thing is written, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. As one whom his mother comforteth, so will He comfort you!" Can any man forget how

sucking child, that she should not have compassion upon the son of her womb? yea, she may forget, yet will not I forget you."

It is the voice of "the consolation of Israel," who was "anointed to bind up the broken-hearted, and comfort those that mourn," and who is a High Priest that "can have compassion." What could more emphatically prove his love than coming to this world of sorrow and sin to suffer and die for us, when we were enemies to God? He left the habitation of glory for the stable of an inn, the homage of angels for the insults of men, the smile of his Father for the temptations of the devil, the raptures of heaven for the groans of Gethsemane, the splendours of the throne for the ignominy of the cross, the brightness of the celestial glory for the darkness of the tomb. And why was this? It was love which prompted the sacrifice. Love, to the undeserving, to the rebellious, to those who then crucified him, and to those who now pierce him by their sins! And love still prompts his intercession at God's right hand. Having done so much to save us, will he suffer us to

perish in the storm? "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, will he not with him also freely give us all things?" Will the love which has already effected such marvels fail us in any extremity? May we not feel every doubt dispelled, when we recognise it to be Jesus who says "It is I?" The sceptre he grasps is omnipotence; but we need not be afraid when the hand that wields it is love! The winds and the sea obey him; but the voice to which the universe pays homage says to every trembling disciple, "Be of good cheer."

"The God that rules on high,
And thunders when he please;
That rides upon the stormy sky,
And manages the seas:
This awful God is ours,
Our Father, and our Friend!"

It is the voice of Wisdom as well as Love. It might be asked, "Why should not the power that can control the tempest have forbidden it to arise? Why should not the love which tells us not to fear have kept far from us all occasion of fear?" There is love in sending

the storm, no less than in appearing to us in the midst of it. Afflictions are themselves proofs of kindness; but the kindness of a wise Father, who withholds not chastisement when he sees it to be for his children's good. Love, not directed by wisdom, is often injurious to the objects of it. But the love of Jesus is such, that whatever is calculated for the advantage of his people is sure to be bestowed. "They shall not want any good thing." And are not afflictions among the best of good things, if they tend to alienate us from earth, and to fix our affections more on himself? Is not the tempest an inestimable blessing, if it brings us more obviously into the presence of Jesus? If when all was serenity we were becoming indifferent to the company of our divine Friend, should we not praise him for the storm which opens our eyes to watch for his appearing, and our ears to listen to his voice? Are not our heaviest trials among our greatest mercies, when they reveal Jesus to us more vividly, and unite us to him more closely?

Jesus knows that trials are necessary for

us. Though the way to glory hath numberless and incomparable delights, yet he himself has told us to expect storms. "In the world ye shall have tribulation." The experience of believers of all ages testifies that

"The path of sorrow, and that path alone,
Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown."

In some form or other, at some time or other, suffering we should look for; suffering we shall have. They who appear exempt are so for a season only. When the calm seems most profound, the tempest may be gathering. But the darkness, however deep, —the waves, however wild,—are no disproof of Christ's love; but they are illustrations that his love is wise. "He doth not afflict willingly, or grieve the children of men." If the trial were not necessary, it would not be sent. "Now, for a season, if *need be*, we are in heaviness through manifold trials." There is always a 'need-be,' though we may not fully perceive it. Trials remind us that this world is not our home. If we met with no sorrows in our way, we should be still more

prone than we are at present to forget that better land towards which we are journeying. The inconveniences of the road continually tell us that we are only strangers and sojourners. We are taught our frailty, made to feel the insufficiency of earthly things to give us lasting and full enjoyment, and led in our misery more earnestly to seek the aid of our divine Comforter, and to "look to the Rock that is higher than we."

Faith is strengthened by trial. Every Christian grace becomes more vigorous by exercise. Therefore we are taught by the Apostle Paul to "glory in tribulation also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope." The Apostle James speaks in similar terms: "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into diverse trials; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience." The Apostle Peter also encourages believers to patience and cheerfulness in affliction, by the thought that "the trial of our faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be

found unto praise, and honour, and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." *

Not that the beneficial effects of the storm are always felt while it continues. The mind may be too much agitated by terrors, too much occupied by sorrow, too much debilitated by sympathy with a diseased body, to be conscious of any immediate advantage. And thus, for our encouragement, we are told that "no affliction for the present seemeth joyous, but grievous: nevertheless *afterward* it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby." So in a tempest, the gale from which the mariner dreads destruction often drives the vessel rapidly onward in her course. This may not be perceived while the storm is at its height. But *afterwards*, when the sky becomes clear, — *afterwards*, when the necessary observations can be taken, — it is often found that much more progress has been made during one tempestuous night, than many previous days of calm. This is always the case with the storms which assail the believer. They inva-

* Romans x. 3, 4; James i. 2, 3; 1 Peter i. 6, 7.

fiably speed him onward towards his desired haven; and though, while the winds are howling and the waves roaring around, he may say "All these things are against me," and fear he is being driven farther from port; nevertheless afterwards he discovers with thankfulness that the winds he dreaded have been wafting him onward in his voyage, and that the waves which seemed to threaten him with death have borne him heavenward.

"It is I!" Yes; the result proves it was Jesus. How many of his people in all ages have echoed the sentiment of the Psalmist, "It was good for me that I have been afflicted!" It is this which he intends. "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons." Children seldom see, at the time they are corrected, what advantage can result from it. They may think it hard to be denied this gratification, to submit to that exercise of discipline, to be made to apply themselves to a course of tedious study, or to take nauseous medicine when they are ill. But it is

wise love in the parent which imposes present pain for the sake of permanent advantage. Earthly fathers may err, but our heavenly Father never. What he does is *always* "for our profit." "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God." Then let us not murmur at the storm. "Would we be children, and not be chastenedly overcome, and not contend,—be gold, and not be tried,—be Christians, and not suffer?"

As the bush which Moses beheld on Horeb was not consumed although in flames, for God was there;—and as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came forth from the midst of the burning fiery furnace unhurt, because the Son of God had walked with them there,—even so the afflictions which Christians suffer can not so kindle upon them as that one hair of their head shall be injured! We may have to endure even *fiery* trials; but we know that the furnace is heated, not to consume, but to purify. In the language of Malachi: "He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver."

Does the craftsman throw the precious metals into the flames, and forget them? They are too costly. He is anxious and careful respecting them. He sits patiently at the door of the furnace, intently watchful. As soon as he sees his own face reflected from the molten metal within, he knows that the process has been successful, and he abates the fury of the flames. So does Jesus watch the furnace of affliction in which his people are being purified, not allowing them to suffer injury and loss, but only waiting to see his own image reflected from their hearts. They come forth as gold seven times purified.

"Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword, separate us from the love of Christ?" The very contrary. They unite us more closely to him. We not merely survive, but are victorious. "Nay, in all these things we are *more* than conquerors through him that loved us." *More* than conquerors,—not merely remaining in possession of the field, but coming forth unscathed from the conflict, and not merely unscathed, but invigorated. He is indeed a

conqueror who, resolutely resisting an attack, wards off every blow so that he suffers no injury, and who, though the conflict may be stern, overthrows, disarms, and tramples under foot his assailant. But if with a generous hand he raises him from the ground, and, not content with overcoming his body by superior valour, subdues his spirit also by superior love, he gains a victory yet more complete. By mastering the foe, he becomes a conqueror; but by converting that foe into a friend, he becomes "more than conqueror."

Such is the victory of the believer. The trials by which he is assailed are not only deprived of all power to injure, but become the principal occasions and instruments of his invigoration, comfort, and salvation. However forbidding their appearance, however rough their salutation, they are bearers of Heaven's most precious boons. They wear the aspect of foes only at a distance, and in the beginning of the fight. Soon the Christian warrior embraces them as friends; and the weapons which seemed pointed against him are by faith reversed, and become ranged

around him for his defence. His assailants are now his allies; and thus recruited by the encounter, "in all these things he is *more than conqueror*, through him that loved us."

The faith which recognises in all events the voice of Jesus is the true alchemy which transmutes all baser substances into gold. However otherwise valueless, even though pernicious and destructive, they now become a precious treasure. In the calculation of his wealth, the believer may include his heaviest trials and keenest sorrows. The apostle Paul says "All things are yours, the world, life, death, things present, things to come, *all* are yours." Men do not reckon losses among their possessions. These "all things" are therefore gain to those of whom it may be added "and ye are Christ's." Afflictions therefore, the frowns of "the world" as well as its smiles, the sorrows of "life" as well as its joys, the sad separations and painful approaches of "death" as well as the heavenly summons it conveys, the storms and struggles of "things present" as well as the calm and the repose of "things to come," — *ALL* are

ours. Were we wise, we should not wish to part with one of them; for who deliberately impoverishes himself? Saw we as God sees, we should *understand how* they were all working together for our good. But though "we walk by faith, not by sight," may we not be as certain of the result, since God declares it, as if we comprehended the process? The storm is ours!

"There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling,"* is a promise to the fullest extent verified in the case of all who "dwell in the secret place of the Most High." To them sorrows are not "evils," sicknesses are not "plagues;" "The shadow of the Almighty," extending far around those who "abide under it," alters the character of all things which come within its influence. Joys are enhanced, and sorrows become joys. The day is brighter, and the night itself is turned to day. Passing through this medium, the lightning, which would have blasted, now only serves to render luminous the path, gilding it with glory; and the poisonous stream, in such an atmo-

* Psalm xci.

sphere, as this, not merely loses every noxious quality, but, as it murmurs by the believer, refreshes, heals, and strengthens him.

Thus the storm is terrible in appearance only. The winds and waves which beat on the vessel, instead of weakening, make it stronger and more sea-worthy. The buffeting of the billows renders its timbers the more compact. The voyage will be the more prosperous, and the admission into the peaceful harbour at its termination the more triumphant. "For so, an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." Trials, however evil in themselves, become invaluable blessings when inflicted by a Father's hand. Of all the children of God now in glory, it is true that "he led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation." It was often a rugged way, a dark way, a mysterious way; a stormy way, but always the *right way*. It is so still. I may experience it to be a vale of tears through which I pass, but whatever griefs I feel,

whatever difficulties I encounter, 'it is the *right* way, for it is my Father's,—and who so wise and kind as he? It is the way to "a city of habitation." Every step is necessary to take me nearer to that heavenly home. The very toils of the journey will result in bliss, and how soon will they be over! What a bright dawn will follow the few dark hours during which we may be "tossed by the waves, toiling in rowing, the wind being contrary!" "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." How short the night compared with the eternal day that morning harbingers! Yes, amid the tumult and terror of the tempest, Jesus, controlling all things with only one design, our good, bids us be of good cheer, saying "It is I; be not afraid."

"God moves in a mysterious way

His wonders to perform;

He plants his footsteps in the sea,

And rides upon the storm.

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take,

The clouds ye so much dread

Are big with mercy, and shall break

In blessings on your head.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
 But trust him for his grace;
 Behind a frowning providence,
 He hides a smiling face."

Moreover, the voice which speaks to us in the storm is that of one who has himself been tempest-tost. He was once the "man of sorrows," with an emphasis to which none of his followers can lay claim. There are no trials which they endure with which he is not experimentally familiar. He knew what it was to suffer bodily privation. "He had not where to lay his head." He "was an hungry." He endured the torture and ignominy of the scourge and the cross. "He was despised and rejected of men." His own friends "forsook him and fled." He endured unutterable anguish of spirit. "It pleased the Lord to bruise him." "He put him to grief." "Being in an agony he prayed more earnestly." His soul was "exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." He "sweat great drops of blood." On the cross he exclaimed, with a bitter cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

These were real agonies, real temptations. It was not a fictitious storm which burst upon him. It was not the mere *appearance* of tempest. The conflict was not imaginary. He was without sin, but not without a struggle against sin. He overcame, not because there was nothing to resist, but because love to his Father was supreme in his breast. The pain of hunger in the desert was real and acute. The inducement to appease that pain was real. But submission to the will of his Father was a stronger principle. Yet the struggle was severe. Else it would not be true that in "all points he was tempted like as we are." There is no degree of suffering, or of conflict, which he did not endure. None of his followers can ever experience what he has not felt before. The wind never blew against any bark so furiously as against his! The night was never so dark, the waves never so boisterous, as when he encountered the storm.

What strong consolation is thus presented to afflicted disciples! Jesus is as able to feel for our distress as to deliver us out of it. His is a true sympathy. We do not suffer alone.

He bears our griefs. What encouragement to "come with boldness to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need," when we know that "we have not a High Priest who cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities!" The sorrows which oppress us weighed more heavily on him. The foes we battle with more fiercely assailed him. We but taste the bitter cup; he drained it. There fall on us but a few drops of the tempest which spent its rage on him!

If then he, the holy, harmless, undefiled, escaped not the storm, shall we wonder or repine at affliction? In us there is much dross to be consumed; but in him there was none. If he suffered, not for himself, but for us, shall not we be content to suffer for ourselves? He consecrated the path of sorrow by his own sacred footsteps, and thus conferred on it a peculiar dignity. As the thorns which lacerated his brow composed a crown, so there is henceforth a majesty in grief which no earthly joys can boast. The King of kings wore a diadem of pain, and appeared on earth,

not as the man of gladness, but "the man of sorrows." Let us rejoice in being conformed unto our Lord. Should not the servant be like his Master? If he encountered storms, is it fitting we should enjoy unbroken calm? "If he led through rugged ways, shall we think to traverse only flowery meadows? It is a joyful thing to be a sharer with Christ in anything. All enjoyments wherein he is, not are bitter to a soul that loves him, and all sufferings with him are sweet. The worst things of Christ are more delightful than the best things of the world. His afflictions are sweeter than its pleasures. Love delights in likeness, not only in things pleasant, but in the hardest things, which have nothing in them desirable but only that likeness. What does the world by its hatred but make us more like him? When he was sought for to be made a king, he escaped; but when he was sought to be brought to the cross, he freely yielded himself. And shall I creep back from what he calls me to suffer? Hath he not gone through all before, and made all easy and lovely? Hath he not sweetened poverty, persecution,

hated, disgrace, and death itself,—perfumed the grave, and turned it from a pit of horror into a sweet resting bed? ”*

“It is I!” Jesus calls our attention to *himself*. He says not “Be of good cheer; you are skilful, strong, persevering, and well able to cope with the storm,”—but “Be of good cheer; it is I.” Our rigging may be rent, our sails torn, our rudder lost, our vessel distasted, leaky, and almost a wreck; but when Jesus says “It is I,” we cannot sink. Nothing can injure us with him,—nothing save us without him! A babe and Christ can master the universe. But the babe does nothing, Christ everything. In our carnal pride we would be doing everything,—pumping, rowing, shifting the sails, as though by our own efforts we could escape. But Christ will make us know how vain are all our labours without him. He alone can save.

When the angel of destruction smote Egypt’s firstborn, but passed over the houses of the Israelites; the feeble infant was as safe as the vigorous man, if the blood was sprinkled on the door. The strength of the one could

not have defended him. The helplessness of the other could not have endangered him. So the blood of Christ is our only and all-sufficient safeguard. When Jesus was in the ship with his disciples, the weakest of them was as safe as the strongest; for the security of all was the same, the presence of their Lord. So if he is with us in the storm, our safety is not affected by anything in ourselves, but is absolutely guaranteed by him. "It is I!" Whatever our unworthiness, however weak our faith, *Christ* is our deliverer; and "he is able to save to the uttermost." A helpless disciple, holding the hand of a mighty Saviour, will come forth unhurt out of every storm. Jesus says "My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness." With the Apostle let me respond, and say "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in necessities, in distresses: for when I am weak, then am I strong." "It is I!" This was a voice the efficacy of which the disciples had often witnessed.

It had said "Arise; take up thy bed, and walk,"—and the poor cripple was made whole. It had said "Be opened,"—and the ears of the deaf were unstopped. It had said to the leper "Be thou clean,"—"and immediately his leprosy departed from him." It had said "Go out of him,"—and the demoniac was restored to his right mind. It had said "Arise,"—and "he that was dead sat up, and began to speak." It had just blessed the five loaves and the two fishes,—and twelve baskets full of fragments remained after five thousand had feasted. And the disciples had been before in a storm, when Jesus was asleep in the hinder part of the ship. "They were in jeopardy," for "the ship was covered with the waves." But when Jesus rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, "Peace; be still,"—the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. Might not the disciples reasonably dispel their fears, when a voice which had always been so mighty said "Be of good cheer?"

Afflicted believer, is the voice which addresses you altogether strange? Can you not

call to mind many a storm in which it has dispelled your fears and soothed your sorrows? Does not the history of the Church in all ages testify to the wonderful deliverances Christ has effected for his people? Have not his followers always been tossed with tempests? yet has not the Lord delivered out of them all? It is not more certain that Christians have always been an afflicted people, than that Jesus has always been with them to preserve them amidst the tempest. How great the cloud of witnesses who testify to his constant care and unchanging love! How innumerable the multitude who have come out of great tribulation, and now, clothed in white raiment, ascribe salvation to God and the Lamb!

Yes! it is a voice which has never spoken in vain! Be of good cheer, afflicted disciple! Think what he has already done for you! He groaned, bled, and died for you. You were lost, but he found you; an enemy, but he reconciled you; a captive, but he freed you; blind, but he cured you; dead, but he quickened you. He washed you from your guilt in his blood. He clothed you with his

own, white robe. He renewed your corrupt nature. He imparted to you his sanctifying and comforting Spirit. He introduced you to the Father, and you became a child of God. He now intercedes for you, is preparing for you a mansion of glory, and has given you a title to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. How often has he spoken to you in tones of tenderness! How has your heart burned within you as he has walked with you in the way! What peace and joy have you experienced while he has held converse with your soul! Has not he turned your mourning into dancing, your night into day, your tempest into calm already?

Having done so much for you, will he now leave you to perish? May you not with confidence use the same argument with which Manoah was comforted by his wife, when, having been visited by the angel of Jehovah, he feared they would be destroyed? "If the Lord were pleased to kill us, he would not have received a burnt offering and a meat offering at our hands, neither would he have

shewed us all these things." Would Jesus have done so much for you already,—would he have called you by his grace, renewed you by his Spirit, comforted you by his love, and preserved you to this day, if he intended now to abandon you? If he sought you when a stranger, will he not take care of you now you are a child? If the foe was loved, how much more the friend! "If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, how much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life!" Will he refuse to answer the prayers he himself has prompted, to fulfil the hopes he himself has inspired, to honour the confidence he himself has encouraged, to complete the work he himself has begun? No! former mercies are a sure earnest of the future inheritance, former deliverances a certain pledge of final safety! Amid the howling of the storm let this be your song,—

His love in time past finds me to-day;
He'll leave me at last, in trouble to sink;
Each sweet Ebenezer I have in review
Confirms his good pleasure to bring me quite through."

How unreasonable is it for a disciple of Jesus to be anxious! We are told to cast all our care on him, "for he careth for us." How unnecessary to do that for ourselves which is so much better done by him! He has undertaken to do all for us which not only our safety but our happiness requires. His infinite love prompts him always to choose what his infinite wisdom reveals to be best for us; while his infinite power enables him to accomplish it. Are we not perfectly safe then in such keeping? Suppose we could control the elements, and that for some important object we had called forth a storm, if we were in a vessel which could not sink, we should contemplate the raging waters with pleasure, knowing that they were fulfilling our own intentions, and that a perfect calm would ensue the moment that we gave the word. But this is actually true; only the ruling of the storm is in the hands of Jesus instead of our own. Shall we be less courageous on this account? Knows he not much better than we the special purposes for which the storm is needed, and the precise moment

when its violence should be allayed? Should we not rely with fullest confidence on his watchful care, and rejoice, however loud the tempest, that it can accomplish only our good, having no power to do us harm?

"It is I!" O how should all anxieties subside at the sound! Are they caused by the cares of this life? Jesus says "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you; O ye of little faith?" "All things work together for good to them that love God." "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him,

and delivereth them. They that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of them all." *

Why then should Christians fear? And if Jesus cares for the body, how much more will he supply the wants of the *soul*! Is not his assurance, "My grace is sufficient for thee," encouragement enough in every extremity? Has he not undertaken *everything* for the sinner? Is he not made to us "wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption?" However "poor, and wretched, and miserable, and blind, and naked" in ourselves, are we not "complete in him?" What could he say that he has left unsaid, to calm our apprehensions? "O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy

* Matt. vi. 25—34; Rom. vii. 25; Psalm xxxiv.

on thee. Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour!" He is faithful who hath promised. He cannot deny himself. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but his words shall not pass away; and he has said of all his people; "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any one pluck them out of my hand."*

Let us but believe these promises, and there will be a great calm. As when the disciples "received Jesus into the ship the wind ceased, and immediately they were at the land whither they went," so when we by faith fully receive Christ into our hearts the raging of the storm is over. The external troubles may continue, but can produce no tempest within. The believer is "kept in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on God." One of the martyrs, exposed to public derision, in an iron

* Isaiah liv, 6—17; xliii, 1—3; John x, 28.

cage, is reported to have said to a bystander, who expressed surprise at the cheerfulness he manifested; "You can see these bars, but you cannot hear the music in my conscience." So the world, looking only at the outward affliction, may see no abatement of the hurricane, and may wonder at the composure the Christian exhibits in the midst of it. They hear the thunder, and the roaring of the winds and waves, but cannot distinguish the voice of Jesus, saying "It is I," which so cheers the tossed disciple. They can appreciate the outward trouble, but not the inward consolation of the life "hid with Christ." It is "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding."

Let us then reply to the promises of God in the exulting language of faith. Let songs of praise arise from the ark in which we are securely borne along amidst the storm. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with

the swelling thereof! Though deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts; and all thy billows and thy waves are gone over me; yet the Lord will command his loving-kindness in the daytime, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life: O Lord God of hosts, who is a strong Lord like unto thee? or to thy faithfulness round about thee? Thou rulest the raging of the sea: when the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them! Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him who is the health of my countenance, and my God." * . . .

But it is possible that some may read these pages who are not disciples. If you love sin and the world,—if you have not surrendered your heart to Christ, and are not by earnest prayer and humble reliance seeking to participate in the blessings he died to purchase, the mere profession of religion will be of no avail. You are exposed to storms. But while strangers to the love of Jesus, he does not say to you "Be of good cheer!"

* Psalms xlii. 1—3; xlii. 7, 8, 11; lxxxix. 8, 9.

You are in peril, awful, inconceivable! You are voyaging on the ocean of life, without a compass, a pilot, or a chart! You have no rudder to guide you, and no anchor to hold you in the storm! Terrible is the tempest which soon will burst over you! The waves will cover you! You will "sink like lead in the mighty waters," down to those depths of darkness and woe where hope never enters, where day never dawns. You *ought* to fear! At present you may see no danger, and be tossed by no billows. But there is peril in that calm. It is

the "The torrent's smoothness ere it dash below."

Destruction is before you,—and the whirlpools of hell yawn to engulf you! Indifference is insanity. To be of good cheer is utter madness. Terror becomes you! O that you might from the heart utter the cry "What must I do to be saved?"

You are perhaps greatly afflicted, and need consolation, but there is none for *you*. If you seek it in this book, the writer solemnly assures you he dares not offer you any, be-

cause the Bible does not offer you any. Do not confound sorrow with piety, and fancy that, because you are in a storm, Jesus must be there to comfort and deliver you. He is only with his *disciples* in the storm. He has long invited you to join them, but, not desiring his company, and unwilling to comply with his requirements, you chose to sail in a vessel of your own, and now you must struggle through the waves as you can. Think not that eternity offers you any hope. Be not so deluded as to regard death as a release from trouble. A tempest far more terrible awaits you in the next world than any that ever assailed you in this. There will be no pleasant harbour for you to enter. Your soul will be eternally suffering shipwreck, broken by the waves for ever, beating on the rocks for ever!

Is there then *no* comfort for you? Not while continuing what you are, "an enemy to God by wicked works." As such, you must not venture to seek consolation from him; for "he hateth all workers of iniquity," and "the *wrath* of God abideth on you."

Your condition and character must be changed. You must be *reconciled* before you can be comforted. Till then, not a promise in his word applies to you. The load of your sins must be removed before the burden of your cares can be lightened. Your guilt must be your chief care. God is willing to heal *every* wound, but the deadliest first,—to calm *every* storm, but the most terrible *first*. He has one gift to bestow infinitely greater than all the rest; the “unspeakable gift,” Christ Jesus. Seek this first, and “all other things shall be added unto you.”

You are perhaps anxious to obtain this. You feel all other troubles light in comparison to the danger your soul is in. You wish to flee from the wrath to come. Conscience loudly accuses you. The law of God thunders out its curses. The sky seems black above, and destruction stares you in the face! You think, perhaps, that for you there is no hope! You see God in the storm, preparing the lightning of his justice with which to strike you down to hell! God is indeed in the storm, but it is in the person of his

Son! Let your eye gaze upon Jesus! for he is there, offering to screen you from the danger, and saying to all who flee to him for safety "Be of good cheer!"

To behold God as the Creator and the Judge cannot but fill us with dismay. He is a consuming fire. His justice will condemn, and his power overwhelm us. But the Gospel has been revealed that this dread of God may be changed into confidence, and that, instead of trembling at his wrath, we may confide in his mercy. Nothing can give the sinner peace until he hears and understands the voice of Jesus, saying "It is I." We must see "God in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing our trespasses unto us," before we can rejoice in God. Jesus is "the way, the truth, and the life." No man cometh unto the Father but by him. God requires perfect obedience. But how far have we come short of this! "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves." "There is none righteous; no, not one." But the penalty of sin is death. "The wicked shall be turned into hell." To disprove our guilt, and

to atone for it by our own works, are equally impossible. To suffer the penalty of it is eternal ruin. Where then is hope? In Jesus! He has perfectly obeyed, and fully suffered on our behalf. His righteousness and his death are put in the place of ours. "We have redemption through his blood,"—"the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin,"—and we are "accepted in the beloved." "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," is the only, and it is a sufficient answer to every anxious sinner seeking refuge from the storm. You must seek for comfort in Christ, or you will seek in vain. But apply to him, and you cannot fail. Say as Peter did when he began to sink, "Save, Lord, or I perish!" and he will put forth his hand at once. It is already held out to help you. Lay hold of it by faith, and salvation is yours. "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world. Look unto me, and be ye saved!" You are invited to regard him not as the Creator, but the Saviour; not as the Judge, but the Advocate; not as the Ruler, but the Mediator! When

conscience accuses, hear him say "It is I! I who have fully atoned for thy sins! I who have blotted them all out by my blood!" When the thought of God alarms, listen to his voice: "It is I! I who have made peace by my bloody cross! I by whom the just God becomes the justifier of the ungodly!" When the painful conviction of shortcomings, after all our striving, overwhelms, again he says "It is I! I whose white robe will cover all thy filthy rags! I from whose perfect obedience, and not from thy own unworthiness, thou art to look for acceptance with God!" When a sense of weakness, and inability, to cope with the many difficulties and dangers which surround us, depresses the mind, again his voice is heard, "It is I! I who have engaged to perform all things for thee! I who will never leave thee, nor forsake thee!" "It is I!" This is enough to satisfy every doubt, to quell every fear, to meet every difficulty. Am I guilty? Jesus receives the chief of sinners! Am I helpless? Jesus is able to save to the uttermost! Am I lost? Jesus came to seek and to save

the lost!" Have I no merits? Jesus is "made to us righteousness!" Have I nothing? In Jesus "all fulness dwells!" He died for me; he lives to intercede for me; he watches over, strengthens, succours me; he guides me in darkness, cheers me in sorrow, defends me in danger, and is preparing a place for me in heaven! If he is with me, what can injure me? If he is for me, who can be against me? The winds and waves may roar around; but they have no power to harm me while Jesus says, "It is I."

"And when the last storm of all assails me, he will still be at hand: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." It will not be a dark valley, if his form appears in it, — it will not be dreary, if his voice is heard. There is no such thing as death to the believer. "He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and he that liveth and believeth in me shall never die." Jesus by his own dying extracted the sting from death, and deprived it of all power

to injure. "He destroyed, death, and delivered them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." We can echo the sentiment of a departing saint, who said "I can smile on death, because Jesus smiles on me." Or rather death disappears, and Christ alone is seen. *He* holds the keys of the invisible world, and is present at the death-bed of every saint, to liberate the spirit from the corruptible body, and to receive it into the "house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

Let this be our consolation when we mourn over those who sleep in Jesus. It is not an enemy who hath done this. It is no frightful monster who has torn that dear one from our loving embrace. It was a Brother's arms which received the departing spirit. He commits the important office to no inferior messenger, far less to an enemy. "*I will come again, and receive you unto myself.*" Dying Stephen beheld him, when he said "Lord Jesus, into thy hands I commit my spirit." Yes, it is Jesus! In that chamber of anxiety and tears, where the feeble tide of ebbing life

is watched so tenderly, and all is being done that skill and kindness can suggest to delay the dreaded moment of separation, Jesus is saying "It is I." In that darkened abode, where the activity of love no longer holds back the floodgates of grief, Jesus whispers "It is I." At that sad funeral procession, each advancing step of which seems as though it were conveying the mourners to their own burial, Jesus—as at Nain—touches the bier, and says to the widow, the fatherless, the friendless, "It is I." At the open grave, where with that dead body are to be sepulchred so many living joys and hopes, Jesus—as at Bethany—stands amongst the mourners, and, while weeping with them, allays their sorrow, saying "It is I." Yes, it is Jesus who has taken away the departed spirit, to the full enjoyment of a love still tenderer than theirs, in a world where tears are never shed, and pain is never felt, and death is for ever unknown! Let us then be consoled by the thought of the instantaneous and perfect bliss of those whose separation from us we lament. Amidst the storm, in which we

lose sight for a season of those who were dearer than life itself,

"This is the solace to our sorrow given,
That they were borne on tempest's wing to heaven,
And are rejoicing, midst the pure and free,
In the high home of God, where there is NO MORE SEA!"

This consideration should be enough to sustain our minds when a similar tempest bursts upon ourselves. Death to the disciple is Jesus. Every symptom of increasing disease only proves that Jesus is nearer. The clouds may seem dark—the thunder terrible—the waves overwhelming; but they only betoken the near approach of our heavenly Friend. He speaks amidst the tumult, and says "It is I!—I who, having prepared thy mansion, have come to take thee to myself! Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid!" Shall we shrink from his embrace? Shall we not rather rejoice that our deliverance draweth nigh, knowing that to depart and be with Jesus is far better?

The author being recently at Scarborough, during tempestuous weather, observed early

in the morning two small fishing-vessels approaching the harbour. The crews had been exposed to the gale for several days, and their strength and provisions were nearly exhausted. How eagerly they longed for the plenty, and security, and repose which seemed now so near! But such furious breakers raged round the pier, that it was obvious to those on shore that to attempt an entrance would be destruction. The cliff was hastily scaled, a beacon kindled, and signals made that they must again stand out to sea. In a few minutes the warning would be too late. There was a moment's anxious suspense. Then the little vessels were seen reluctantly to alter their course, and, disappointed in their hopes, their exhausted crews had again to face the storm! How happy the contrast in the case of the disciple of Christ! The fury of the tempest, instead of driving him from his strong refuge, makes him only the more welcome there. The harbour of Christ's love is always accessible! The greater our distress, the readier our entrance! And the final resting-place—the heaven of glory where that love is fully

manifested, and where those who enter are for ever secure from all future perils—is full in view when the last great storm bursts over us. How invitingly does it spread itself out before the eye of faith! How perfect the peace, how unbroken the calm, how ineffable the bliss, which are experienced there! No tears are shed, no alarm is felt, no temptations assail there! The beacon blazes, not to repel, but to allure! Angels beckon us to approach! Jesus bids us not be dismayed! For the last time, he says “Be of good cheer; it is I!” No disciple ever suffered shipwreck in endeavouring to enter there. The tempest that rages outside only drives the labouring vessel more quickly in. Those waves only bear the soul more rapidly home. That hurricane only wafts the spirit more triumphantly to God! How brief the struggle, how long the repose! “After ye have suffered awhile, *eternal glory!*” Of the accumulated trials of the longest life we may say, with such a prospect, “Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while

we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."

"O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

"Lord, I believe! help thou my unbelief! Pity and pardon the fears of thy poor, weak, trembling disciple! Help me to behold thee more clearly, more constantly! May I hear thy voice both in the tempest and the calm. Let the kind assurance "It is I" always be enough to gladden my heart. Often hast thou said "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden; and I will give you rest." Lord, I would now accept thy gracious call. I bring thee nothing but a burden of guilt and wretchedness! Naked, vile, undone, just as I am, I come! And I know thou wilt not cast me out. From the midst of the waves I look up to thee! I am come into deep waters! The winds are boisterous, the tempest is high! Outward woes, inward conflicts, assail my feeble bark! I must soon sink without thy promised help! Save me,

O God, for the waters are come in unto my soul! Let not the waterflood overflow me, neither let the deep swallow me up! The sorrows of my heart are enlarged: O bring thou me out of my distresses! Lord, save me; I perish! Rebuke the waves! Bring me out of many waters! Let the light of thy love disperse the darkness! Let the thunder of the storm be hushed by thy voice, saying "It is I; be not afraid!"

"Jesus! lover of my soul,
 Let me to thy bosom fly,
 While the nearer waters roll,
 While the tempest still is high!
 Hide me, O my Saviour, hide,
 Till the storm of life is past:
 Safe into the haven guide:
 O receive my soul at last!"

"THEY THAT GO DOWN TO THE SEA IN SHIPS, THAT DO BUSINESS IN GREAT WATERS; THESE SEE THE WORKS OF THE LORD, AND HIS WONDERS IN THE DEEP. FOR HE COMMANDETH AND RAISETH THE STORMY WIND, WHICH LIFTETH UP THE WAVES THEREOF. THEY MOUNT UP TO

THE HEAVEN, THEY GO DOWN AGAIN TO THE DEPTHS; THEIR SOUL IS MELTED BECAUSE OF TROUBLE. THEY REEL TO AND FRO, AND STAGGER LIKE A DRUNKEN MAN, AND ARE AT THEIR WIT'S END. THEN THEY CRY UNTO THE LORD IN THEIR TROUBLE, AND HE BRINGETH THEM OUT OF THEIR DISTRESSES. HE MAKETH THE STORM A CALM, SO THAT THE WAVES THEREOF ARE STILL. THEN ARE THEY GLAD BECAUSE THEY BE QUIET; SO HE BRINGETH THEM UNTO THEIR DESIRED HAVEN. OH THAT MEN WOULD PRAISE THE LORD FOR HIS GOODNESS, AND FOR HIS WONDERFUL WORKS TO THE CHILDREN OF MEN!"

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